

# Church of God, The Eternal

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## The Two Facets of Divine Revelation—Part VIII Natural Man Cannot Comprehend Spiritual Things

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Dear Brethren:

Another warm and special greetings from Eugene. May we once again take this opportunity to convey our love and respect—an inspiration manifested in a keen desire to serve you.

We do wholeheartedly thank you for allowing God the opportunity of assisting in your lives. In no way will God compel or coerce any one of us to do His will. Salvation is too priceless. We must come to recognize its value, the way into that glory and the awesome privilege such service is. From that spiritual vantage point, we can accurately evaluate all things—principally the great needs of mastery and overcoming in our own lives.

We are not called merely to know the Truth. For knowledge is of no value unless it is applied. We must know, and understand the Truth—as a way of life—and then *ACT* upon it. We must see ourselves for what we are. We must *continue* to look into that spiritual mirror of life—God's law—which we commenced doing in preparation for Passover. As the Days of Unleavened Bread depicted—rehearsed once again following observing of Passover as a part of God's Annual Plan of life—we must continue to walk out of sin. Faith without works is dead. So also is the observance of Passover and Unleavened Bread unless we put to practice the spiritual intent and purpose of that which we have just observed physically.

Salvation is nearer than when we first believed. The actual date no one knows. But the conditions prevailing today are certainly indicative of the general times of the last days. It is an indication that we must be about our Father's business. It is a time to put off aggressively the works of darkness. A time to awake to all apathy and indifference. Mastery and character development are not achieved by divine fiat; each requires time to develop, grow and mature. We as the children of light must put on Jesus Christ—true character, mastery, purpose, obedience and all spiritual attributes. *NOW* is our day. Let us not lose this opportunity by oversight, apathy, independence or any other human frailty. Your very call is a proof God knew you could make it if your will so determines.

Now to the next installment of the series on "The Two Facets of Divine Revelation." Up to this time we have seen that man is physical and is, by nature of that creation, limited to natural knowledge. Yet, we have also come to understand, there are two distinct categories of knowledge: The physical and the spiritual. In the last two issues of this series we have seen that man can comprehend naturally, only the physical. He cannot by his own nature and mental capacity understand spiritual things.

Though man's physical limitation to natural knowledge only precludes spiritual understanding, we should assume nothing. To make the whole issue clear, the plethora of Biblical knowledge relevant to this subject will be presented in this May '81 issue.

### **Man Cannot Naturally Comprehend Spiritual Things**

Man is an intelligent being. God created him with mental capacity. He can think, design, plan and reason. He can basically understand whatever he sets his mind and will to comprehend. Yet in all this endeavor, he has never—and will never—break the natural bounds imposed by God. He can comprehend physical knowledge but he cannot understand spiritual knowledge.

God is Spirit. He exists in a realm completely beyond the comprehension of man (Matt. 11:25–27). With Him resides His Son (John 1:1). Also, all angelic beings dwell in the domain of spirit.

But man is flesh. He is a *natural* being—limited to the domain of the physical.

Spirit beings can comprehend both the physical and spiritual. However, fleshly beings can naturally comprehend only the physical—unless a miraculous conversion takes place, a fact which will be explained in due time.

The Apostle Paul makes this point very clear to the Corinthian Church. Apparently a classic argument arose in Corinth. For Paul had to write, by inspiration of the Holy Spirit, ". . . Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him" (1 Cor. 2:9).

Men have never truly observed. They have never, of themselves, so much as really heard. In fact, it is not possible that the thoughts themselves would naturally occur—the thoughts of spiritual things. Though involved in religious fantasies, men do not really know God. For, at the appointed time, God must reveal (make known) the true spiritual things to

men. If they must be revealed, that fact alone makes it obvious they are not known naturally. Paul makes this point clear. In verse 11 of 1 Corinthians 2 we read:

For what man knoweth the things [physical] of a man, save the spirit [mind] of man which is in him? even so the things [spiritual] of God *knoweth no man*, but the Spirit [for lack of a better way to explain, let us say the mind] of God.

Man knows carnal, physical, fleshly, natural things because he is physical. They are a part of his domain. God knows the spiritual things because He is spiritual. He knows all physical and spiritual things. The spiritual is vastly superior to the physical. On the other hand, limited men can comprehend only the physical until God miraculously converts the human mind, making it capable of receiving spiritual things. Such spiritual knowledge is not natural. Again, Paul clarifies. He said: ". . . the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: *neither can he know them*, because they are spiritually discerned" (1 Cor. 2:14). Without the Spirit of God, man can never understand the elusive other "half" of knowledge. And few people have received the Spirit of God. Why? The Apostle John wrote:

. . . the Spirit of truth; whom the world [all people who are not specifically called] *cannot* receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him: but ye [those called of God] know him; for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you (John 14:17).

In fact, ". . . the carnal mind is *enmity against God*: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be. So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God" (Rom. 8:7–8). The sure way to test any or all men is to ascertain the attitude they manifest toward the law (all the law) of God. There are those who accept the Ten Commandments, but reject other sections. There are those who accept certain of the Ten Commandments—as long as they can interpret them to their own personal advantage—but they refuse to accept all ten of the commandments as authoritative and binding in their lives. Still others will accept the Ten Commandments and even the statutes of God but refuse to accept other laws of God, such as the Holy Days. Any refusal to obey all of God's Word is a manifestation of carnality. God requires implicit obedience—obedience to *ALL His laws*. And obedience is "the proof positive" of the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit (see Rom. 8:9).

God is the center of any acceptable spiritual service. He is all in all—the heart of our worship. It is He whom we must obey. How can those then, who do not even know Him serve Him? How can they give Him any form of honor, worship or obedience?

In God's wisdom, He created the world to be devoid of the knowledge of the spiritual—including the knowledge of Him. When writing the first letter to the Corinthians, Paul was inspired to say: ". . . in the wisdom of God the world by wisdom knew not God . . ." (1 Cor. 1:21). Regardless of intellectual capacity, men cannot ascertain God or the spiritual requirements of life by any diligent application of mind. That is, the carnal mind *cannot comprehend God*. Without special intervention by God, man would be hopelessly lost in his own natural state.

Spiritual knowledge is hidden knowledge (1 Cor. 2:7). The Creator God determines it that way. Then as knowledge, hidden by God, it must also be revealed by Him.

Interestingly, because of the veil of flesh, the true children of God are not specifically known by others. The world did not recognize the Christ. If it could not recognize the Son of God, how can it recognize true Christians today? The Apostle John made this point clear. He said: "Beloved, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God: therefore the world knoweth us not, because it knew him not" (1 John 3:1).

What did John really mean in the above statement? Obviously he was not implying that the people could not see Jesus Christ, or that he was not a native of that general geographic area.

What, then, does it mean?

Christ was the Word of God. He was the Truth and the way of life. He was the physical manifestation of something unknown, hidden to man—the spiritual. Men cannot see or comprehend the spiritual. As the world could not recognize Jesus Christ as the physical manifestation of the Word of God—the Spirit—so also the world does not recognize the true children of God today. They see them physically but they do not even remotely comprehend their spiritual parentage, true nature or motivation. Only at the appointed time will the cloak be removed and they will be revealed as the children of God.

How is it possible that man—an intelligent being—can read and yet not comprehend the Truths of the Bible? How is spiritual knowledge hidden to the scrutiny, evaluation and absorption of man?

## The Bible Specifically Written So That It Cannot Be Understood

For many years—from the beginning of creation—the Truths of God, as originally revealed, were passed from generation to generation by *oral* tradition. In the process of time, God selected competent personnel to codify His laws and ways. Two of the earlier writers were Job and Moses. These men were moved by the Holy Spirit to write what God decreed—what was intended to form a part of the very Bible—the *preserved* Word of God.

As a written (codified) book, can it not be read and understood? If it were written by the *hand of man*, why cannot its contents be understood by the *mind of man*?

The very Word (Bible) itself reveals the answers. Let us carefully examine that Word. Only those *spiritually* enlightened can see and understand. By nature they are no more intelligent, educated, capable or astute than others. The difference lies in this single fact: The servants of God have received the mind of Christ through the gift of the Holy Spirit. This gives a power of comprehension and ability not possessed by carnal men. What then, does that Word reveal?

Though carnal, devoid of the Spirit—naturally or because of a rejection of the Truth—*men do not recognize their inability to understand the Bible*. Due to adverse influence—of their own minds or from the evil spirit world—they attempt to interpret the Scriptures. Invariably they pervert or corrupt them. Yet in their own minds they believe they are right (Prov. 14:12 and Prov. 16:25). Always (Prov. 16:2)!

Before the death of the apostles, it was a common occurrence to see people wrest the writings of Paul (2 Pet. 3:16). Peter said:

As also in all his epistles, speaking in them of these things; in which are some things hard to be understood, which they that are unlearned and unstable wrest, as they do also the other scriptures, unto their own destruction.

The scriptures were being perverted. Men were attempting to interpret the words of God. Any such interpretation is bound to end in perversion and corruption. Truth and the understanding of it can come only by divine revelation. And when it is revealed, it will be understood!

The major point to remember is this: The Bible is written in such a way that it can be perverted and completely misunderstood. Do you know of any other book so written? Of course, there are writings of men which are not grasped or understood. But these writings

were confused, unclear and muddled from the time they were written. Not so the Bible. It is called a book of simplicity. Truth is always simple and straightforward. Yet, this book of simplicity is not understood by men until a miraculous revelation occurs.

For further clarification let us observe the following.

Jesus Christ, in His human form as the very Word of God, had this to say when asked about His use of parables:

. . . Because it is given unto you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but *to them it is not given*. . . Therefore speak I to them in parables: because they seeing see not; and hearing they hear not, neither do they understand (Matt. 13:11, 13—Compare Mark 4:10–12 and Luke 8:9–10).

The parables Jesus Christ used form a part of the Bible. And these parables were uttered to *hide the meaning of the Word*, not to clarify. Why? Because Jesus Christ did not desire to call or give the vast majority of His listeners understanding at that point in time. He said He used parables *lest they should see, hear and understand*. Obviously, He did not purpose that the majority really understand the Truth and thereby be held responsible for the knowledge which they received.

Further, John records this statement of Jesus Christ. When speaking to belligerent Jews of His day He said: "Why do ye not understand my speech? even because ye cannot hear my word" (John 8:43).

Were they physically deaf? Of course not! They heard the audible words of Jesus Christ but they could not comprehend their meaning. What Jesus was speaking were the words of God the Father (John 14:10 and John 17:8). A part of the hidden mystery—the realm of spiritual knowledge. Such knowledge cannot be understood until God calls and makes the necessary provision for this enlightenment (John 8:47).

When speaking the very words of God, Jesus was not understood by any but those called to know and respond to the Truth. What Jesus spoke is a part of the written Bible today. Either written or spoken, it cannot be understood by carnal, unconverted man.

An example of this blindness is found in Acts. The book of Acts is a record of the last years of the preaching of the Apostle Paul and of his turn from preaching to the Jews, to the Gentiles to whom God has opened the door of faith and understanding (Acts 28:24–31).

Prophetically, the reality of physical blindness had been written by Isaiah. It had been willed by God. The people could hear the audible words, they could see the printed page, but they could not grasp or comprehend the truth of what they had heard or read (Isa. 6:9–10).

In all their perversions and corruptions of the Word of God, their lack of reason, the inconsistencies, the fact one of their concepts cancels another or the fact that Truth must be singular only does not dawn upon their thinking. Man continues heedlessly in all his blindness and inconsistency (See Isa. 44:18–20).

How long will this blindness continue?

It existed in the days of Israel, Judah and the prophets. It was still a reality in the days of Jesus Christ. He said to those in His own day—the transition period from B.C. to A.D.:

And in them [the Jews of His day] *is* fulfilled the *prophecy* of Esaias [Isaiah], which saith, By hearing ye shall hear, and shall not understand; and seeing ye shall see, and shall not perceive: For this people's heart is waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes they have closed [the natural animosity of man against spiritual truth]; lest at any time they should see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and should understand with their heart, and should be converted, and I should heal them (Matt. 13:14–15).

Blindness prevailed until the time of Jesus Christ. But was that blindness lifted as a result of the first appearance of the Messiah? Or, is it still a reality today? Isaiah was inspired to utter another prophecy which clarifies this. On the basis of the original prophecy of blindness (Isa. 6:9–10) he was moved to write, when responding to the question how long?:

. . . Until the cities be wasted without inhabitant, and the houses without man, and the land be utterly desolate, And the Lord have removed men far away, and there be a great forsaking in the midst of the land (Isa. 6:11–12).

This is obviously a prophecy to be fulfilled later than the time of Jesus Christ. Why? Because the initial part of the prophecy was still applicable in His day. If it is fulfilled later than the time of Jesus Christ, it can be only at the time of the end—a time to transpire just before the Second Coming of Christ and the subsequent setting up of the Kingdom of God.

Plainly, natural man cannot comprehend spiritual things. The Bible, God's Word—the spiritual words of life—was written so that natural, carnal man cannot read and understand it. Yes, even the chosen authors of specific parts of the Bible did not understand what they had written (Dan. 12:9 and 1 Pet. 1:9–12). The logical question to ask next is, why? Why cannot man comprehend?

## **Why Physical Man Cannot Comprehend the Spiritual**

It is a fact that natural man cannot comprehend the spiritual realm of knowledge. But, why? Why did God will it that way? For, obviously it is the will of God since He is the Creator of man.

The Bible, once again, is very specific and clear. Let us understand—for the called, chosen and faithful of God can understand.

Men understand; through study, experimentation, testing and evaluating what they can see, handle, taste—in other words, what is tangible, a reality to them. But Truth is of the Holy Spirit—that which is not seen or touched by men. To natural men, spiritual things are not realities. They are of the mysterious, the unknown. Therefore they reject them, deny them or ridicule them. John explains. The Christian receives God's Holy Spirit, "Even the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive . . ." Why? ". . . because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him . . ." (John 14:17).

The world (all carnal, natural men) cannot receive the Holy Spirit because they do not see (comprehend, grasp, understand) it. Because carnal men will not naturally accept what they cannot see or handle.

Those to whom the Holy Spirit is not manifested are not able to understand that realm of knowledge. For only the mind of God can make spiritual things known. John wrote:

. . . when the Comforter is come, whom I will send unto you [the disciples, and subsequently all called of God] from the Father, even the *Spirit of Truth*, which proceedeth from the Father, he [it] *shall testify of me* (John 15:26).

Jesus was the Word, the Truth, the way of life. To testify of Him is to testify (substantiate, affirm, make real) of the Word of Truth—the spiritual things from that realm of knowledge unknown to natural man.

In addition to the unwillingness of man to accept anything he cannot see is a natural animosity against spiritual things (Rom. 8:7). By nature man is wrathful, hateful and seditious (Eph. 2:1–3). This wrath manifests itself primarily against the will and purpose of God, a natural wrath which is broken by the sacrifice of Christ (Eph. 2:14–15). This condition and state of man is designed by the will of God (Rom. 8:20–21). It is the condition out of which character is developed. The successful conclusion of this life—for those called and empowered by God—is rewarded with rest (cessation of the human struggle) from the wretchedness of natural hearts and minds. What a glorious day that will be—achieved, in part, by those who died in Christ. They rest from these human struggles and are awaiting the promised return of Christ.

Until God calls and makes provision for character change in man, he is bound (in bondage) by his own weaknesses and frailties (Rom. 8:20). He is inherently subject to his own vanity—arrogance of mind. He was made that way by the wisdom of God (1 Cor. 1:21). He was made blind to the spiritual principles of life (Matt. 13:11; compare Mark 4:11 and Luke 8:10). God is the author of man's initial blindness and hardness of heart (John 12:27–41). John's statement is a spiritual revelation of the meaning of Isaiah's statements (Isa. 6:9–10 and Isa. 44:18). Succinctly stated: Man simply cannot comprehend the will of God—the spiritual principles of life—by his own mental powers. Seeing and understanding the Truths of God is a gift. By this very fact, the door for deception and hypocrisy is left open. Only the genuine servants of God know *who* they are. Others of this world will recognize and know them only in the day of revelation—a time when all the world will know who the faithful are.

In this day of deception and hypocrisy, whose voice are the religionists hearing? The multitudes are walking in their own way—the broad way. They make a profession of God and religion but in *works* they deny Him. What is their real source of motivation and inspiration?

### **Men Respond to Another God When Attempting Carnally to Understand Spiritual Things**

As we have seen, men are created devoid of spiritual knowledge. Yet manifold attempts are made to understand God's Word. In their own eyes they believe they are right (Prov. 14:12 and Prov. 16:25). Such is the nature of spiritual deception. Those truly deceived do not know they are deceived. Yet at the same time all the characteristics of deception prevail—resentment against the law of God, rejection of the Holy Days and other statutes of God, treating the Word of God partially—acceptance of part and categoric

rejection of other portions—failure of orientation to connect causes and works, and not effecting personal mastery over their natures of bondage and servitude. But the deceived individual does not see the futility and baseness of these actions—for they are deceived.

Man can do a masterful job of deceiving himself. Yet he has an unseen enemy who is ever willing to help him. Who is it?

When confronted by self-seeking religionists of His day—those who were right in their own eyes—Jesus said: "Why do ye not understand my speech? even because *ye cannot hear my word*" (John 8:43).

They could not hear His word because such capability must first be given. To whom, then, were they listening?

Jesus said:

Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own: for he is a liar, and the father of it (John 8:44).

Satan is the god of this world (2 Cor. 4:4). He has deceived all mankind (Rev. 12:9). Conversion is the miraculous endeavor of God transferring our allegiance from Satan and the ways of darkness to God the Father, Christ, and the Truth—light (Acts 26:18). Successful completion of that transition is a matter of faithful continuity in the newly revealed way of life (compare John 8:31; Matt. 24:13; 1 Pet. 1:7).

The "uncalled" have *never* known the way of life. They continue to exist in the innate blindness of their own minds. However, the called can regress for various reasons if they choose to do so. They can turn from the way of life given and again listen to the subtle voice of Satan the Devil—they, too, can fail to abide in the Truth (John 8:44). When this happens, they can no longer hear (comprehend) the words of God. For they are no longer *of* God (John 8:47). This second state is called spiritual blindness—and how great is that blindness. It is almost impossible to get an offended individual, or one hurt or injured by church members, to hear the word of God again. But no one can justify himself in this condition, for he should never have held God accountable for what other human beings did.

In the day of adversity, confusion and doubt, Satan works long and hard. It is the arena of his greatest efforts. But, faith and conviction are his undoing. He will flee from those who live in confidence and obedience.

Those not called *cannot hear* the words of God. They cannot understand. Those who lose faith and begin to sink into doubt and then finally turn away from the Truth sink into spiritual darkness. They are, all of them, candidates for the adverse influence of Satan the Devil.

Only the faithful can really understand the Truth and grow in that way of life. However, even they have some difficulties to master—which can be accomplished by patience.

### **Even the Called Have Difficulty Understanding All Things**

The call of God grants spiritual understanding. But not all at one time! And not all Bible subjects! We are well aware that much, if not all, of prophecy is reserved in the control of God, the Father. It will be revealed in His own time. But all other Bible knowledge is not comprehended at one given time either. Growth is a spiritual requirement (2 Pet. 3:18). The necessity of growth requires *patience*—a valuable and much needed character trait. Any spiritual assumption is a direct violation of the basic requirement of patience.

Why did Peter mention the necessity of growth in 2 Peter 3:18? The answer is revealed in verse 16. It reads:

As also in all his epistles [the need to be longsuffering, patient, vs. 15], speaking in them of these things; in which are some things hard to be understood, which they that are unlearned and unstable wrest, as they do also the other scriptures, unto their own destruction.

Rather than wait patiently for God to make the Truth known they wrested the unclear scriptures to satisfy their own interpretations. Any such action will *always* result in perversion and corruption of the Word of God.

Ambiguity or ignorance of certain textual material must not induce us to make careless personal interpretations of any verse, section, or concept of the Bible. Only God can make the real Truth known. And He has always done that through His own chosen servants. When the meaning, by revelation, is not clear we must wait patiently for God. Our personal interpretations will not change the will or the purpose of God.

Any revelation of true meaning will be given in the *time* and *to whom* God pleases (Matt. 13:17). The truly called and faithful of God will *always* understand what is necessary. To doubt that is to doubt God and His integrity.

Impatience and *self-esteem* are characteristics of men. Because of his inherent vanity, man usually attempts to camouflage his natural ignorance by conjured-up meanings. Only the faithful servants of God fear His word—trembling before it—and understand the consequence of individual interpretations.

### **Both the "Uncalled" and the "Unfaithful" Pervert the Scriptures**

As seen above, the unstable (those doubting the Truth and their call) wrest the Scriptures (2 Pet. 3:14–17). They do not grow spiritually by orderly and systematic growth. They do not use the initially revealed Truth as a basis for their *faith* and *patience* (vs. 17).

The uncalled, on the other hand, desire to hear and see but they are not able to understand or perceive. Why? Even though they read and study the Scriptures ("hearing" and "seeing") they do not possess the gift of understanding. Again, God has willed it that way (Isa. 6:9–12). The "uncalled" cannot understand because a miraculous conversion process has not been granted to them. Yet they read and study the Bible (vs. 10).

Perversion and corruption of Scripture are acts against logical reasoning integrity—Truth. But those who are so perverted and corrupted never see the reality of this incongruity (Isa. 44:19–20).

The "uncalled" have their own forms of religious service. The Apostle Paul said to the Galatians (peoples in sections of Asia Minor): ". . . when ye [those now called of God] knew not [before conversion] God, ye did *service* unto them which by nature are no gods" (Gal. 4:8). Even though uncalled, they had a form of religion. They had been influenced by an unseen enemy as well as their own carnal minds. They were not completely honest. They did not admit their ignorant state. Therefore they perverted the Scriptures in order to placate themselves.

Ignorance of the uncalled is understandable. They cannot orient their own thinking contrary to the nature resident within them. But for the called to turn back to the perversion and filth of this wretched world is hard to comprehend. Such an orientation was hard for Paul to understand, too. He wrote: "But now, after that ye have known God [called and enlightened], or rather are known of God, *how turn ye again* to the weak and beggarly

elements, whereunto ye desire again to be in bondage?" (Gal. 4:9). To turn from enlightenment and a posture of glory back to the sordidness of human frailty is incomprehensible. Yet it happened in Paul's day and is occurring today with alarming regularity.

The perversion of Scripture by the unenlightened is understandable. What else can they do? But for those once enlightened to turn to such nefarious practices is unforgivable (Heb. 6:4–6 and Heb. 10:26). They are signing their own eternal death warrants, unless through tribulation and adversity they turn back to God in the allotted time for repentance.

When exposed to the illuminating light of Truth and reason, or logic, these Scriptural perversions become glaring and reveal the weakness of the concepts of those who espouse them (Mark 12:18–27; note verse 24). Jesus implied that while they were using the Scriptures they did not know (understand) them. They were perverting the Word of God.

The carnal cannot comprehend the spiritual—the Truth of God. The example of ancient Israel proves this beyond doubt.

### **Even Israel Could Not Understand or Obey the Spiritual**

Israel was a *nation* called by God. To them God, through His servant Moses, revealed the spiritual ways of life—laws, statutes, judgments and ordinances (Deut. 4:5–6). Obedience to this way of life would have been a sign of wisdom, understanding and integrity.

What obedience? Could Israel *really obey* the laws, statutes, judgments and ordinances of the Eternal?

The people, Israel, indicated willingness and intent. They insisted on entering into a covenant agreement with God. What was the response of God? How did He view this intent and response on the part of the people?

Moses records the evaluation of the Eternal. He said: ". . . they [Israel] have well said all they have spoken" (Deut. 5:28). But God knew their limitations. He had created them. Notice His conclusion: "O that there were such an heart in them, that they would fear me, and keep all my commandments always, that it might be well with them, and with their children forever!" (Deut. 5:29). God knew they could not obey spiritually regardless of their intent or promise.

What obedience, then, did God require of the newly formed nation of Israel? The Apostle Paul answers this question. To the Romans he said that the people of old (Israel) served in the oldness of the letter—physically (Rom. 7:6). Obedience of the letter only, still resulted in physical death (2 Cor. 3:6). The assumption that eternal life was afforded Israel of old by letter obedience is erroneous. Letter obedience even if it had been obeyed in the most minute detail, resulted in death. For eternal life is afforded by spiritual obedience only (Rom. 2:29).

In his latter years, Moses was inspired to write about the nation of Israel. He wrote: ". . . they are a nation void of counsel, neither is there any understanding in them" (Deut. 32:28). They were not wise to understand or weigh the results of their actions. They could not see what tomorrow would bring (Deut. 32:29).

Physical obedience, yes. But Israel could do no more. And letter (physical) obedience is woefully inadequate as far as eternal life is concerned.

Joshua knew and understood this profound Truth. When reviewing the covenant agreement with the children of Israel he said: ". . . Ye cannot serve the Lord: for he is an holy God . . ." (Josh. 24:19).

The children of Israel, in comparable fashion to the days of Moses—Deuteronomy 5:28–29—had insisted they would accept God and be obedient. But Joshua, who understood the Truth, said: ". . . Ye *cannot* serve the Lord . . ." Read the whole story in Joshua 24:14–25.

Christ understood and made plain this very principle. He said, the law was given by Moses [but not the ability to obey], but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ (John 1:17). By and through Christ came the *ability to obey* the Spiritual ways of life—the same ways which had been given originally through Moses.

Christ was the Word of God made flesh (John 14:1, 14). He was the Truth and the way (John 14:6). He was a physical entity—a manifested body—the body of Truth, the spiritual way, yet the world did not know Him (1 John 3:1 and John 1:26). In fact, He was spurned and rejected. Seeing and hearing the Word—the spiritual manifestation—did not aid carnal man one iota.

Why, then, the purpose of ancient Israel as a nation and the physical life of Jesus Christ? Both served as examples. From those examples, the called of God can derive the necessary lessons of life. They are recorded for the benefit of the called. All others will reject them even though they are true manifestations of the will of God.

What response will the world exhibit toward those who walk in the footsteps of Jesus Christ? Exactly the same as it manifested toward Christ Himself in His own day (John 15:20–22). Why? Because they know neither you nor Jesus Christ. Even though manifested in the fleshly lives of Christ and His chosen today, the world cannot comprehend the spiritual. Physical obedience, until given the gift of the Holy Spirit, is the only obedience possible. But because of character deficiency, an evil heart, lustful appetites and mental animosity, letter obedience was rarely and infrequently evidenced.

We now live in a day of defensive individualization—the big "I." The Church became apostate, the sheep scattered.

Is such confusion and disarray acceptable to God? Does it exist according to His will? We need to understand.

### **Individual Interpretations Are Not Acceptable**

The Bible speaks of the faithful as those who are steadfast—not "ever learning and changing" (2 Pet. 3:17). Steadfastness in what? Jude spoke of it as "the faith once delivered" (Jude 4). "The faith" invariably refers to the doctrine. Then Peter is warning us against any tampering with the doctrine—the revealed Truth.

Those who trifle with the revealed doctrine are classed as unstable (subject to constant vacillation) and unlearned (without wisdom, knowledge and integrity) by Peter (2 Pet. 3:16). They wrest—individually interpret—the Scriptures.

The faithful will not fall into the trap of individualization. They refuse to fall from their steadfastness—faith and conviction. They are firm in their conviction but also subject to new growth—the *adding* of new knowledge. They are people who *KNOW* that no prophetic scripture is of any private interpretation (2 Pet. 1:19–21). Because they understand that the will of God was spoken through the servants whom God had chosen. The same may be said of all Scripture! Why? Did not holy men write the other scriptures of the Bible as they were moved by the Holy Spirit? Then the will of God is inherent in those scriptures. And only the mind of God can reveal that intent. They cannot be, by means of logic, correctly or individually interpreted.

When God calls His Chosen people, He reveals *His way* to them—a way which Israel as a nation could not find. And concerning which—the spiritual Truths of life—all mankind, until God elects to call some for His own purpose, are blinded (Rom. 11:7).

What Paul is saying is that all are spiritually blinded until God elects to call some to understand. Those only whom God calls will understand the Truth—and they will *all* believe the same thing. God is not divided. He is not confused. Therefore, individual interpretations are not of God.

How do the elect come to KNOW that one way of life?

Paul said: ". . . it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe" (1 Cor. 1:21). God is a God of order. *He* chooses His own servants. *He* reveals the Truth to them. Some are given a commission to preach that way of life. As a result of hearing that Word of life, the called of God acknowledge and respond. They come to KNOW the way of life. That way is one. Individualization leads to error (Mark 12:18–27). Private interpretations are not valid. They are not trustworthy, nor acceptable. The people of God are made apparent—manifested—by their very oneness and cohesiveness. Individualization is a proof of carnality (Gal. 5:20; 1 Cor. 3:3; 1 Cor. 1:10–11). Oneness is the proof and manifestation of the people of God (John 17:23).

Private interpretations are wrong. Only God can reveal the intent of His own mind as recorded in the pages of *The Holy Bible*. To repeat that way is one. Those who honor and respect His Truth manifest it by their very oneness of mind and heart—always endeavoring to keep the unity of that spiritual way of life (Eph. 4:3).

At best, carnal man could keep only the letter intent of the law. But his own natural resentments, animosities and evil nature will generally not allow even minimal obedience. He simply cannot comprehend the spiritual way—that other realm of knowledge which is above and beyond his comprehension.

But, there is hope and a promise.

### **Millennium Prophecy Tells the Story**

"They also that erred (naturally) in spirit [mind] shall come to understanding, and they that murmured shall learn doctrine" (Isa. 29:24).

The day is coming, under the auspices of Jesus Christ, when all spiritual blindness shall be removed. All will come to knowledge—the knowledge of everlasting life. They will be afforded obedience and unity. At that time they will learn the absolute futility of all their human religious efforts—the individualization so manifested in their lives today.

Then, the people will understand. Today, then, unless called of God, carnal man cannot understand the spiritual things of life. He is blind to them. And that blindness is by the will of God, man's Creator.

The July issue will cover the subtopic, "Times When Spiritual Truth Was Codified or Manifested," of this larger, serially written subject.

Before closing, let us take this opportunity to convey our continued love and respect to and for you all. Our prayers are with you. We love you and value your friendship in Christ.

Remember, you are precious to God and to us. Please take care and keep in good health.

With profound and affectionate feelings,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Raymond C. Cole". The signature is fluid and elegant, with a large initial 'R' and 'C'.

Raymond C. Cole